



MaineDOT Flash Facts

Topic: Maine Transportation Safety Laws

An important ingredient to safe driving is knowing the Rules of the Road. These laws enacted over the past several years pertain to Transportation Safety.

Primary Safety Belt Law. The safety seat belt law is now a primary law, allowing an officer to cite a driver or passenger 18 or older solely for failing to wear a safety belt. If a child is unbuckled, the driver can be cited. Tickets for not using safety belts will not be issued until April 1, 2008.

Passing Another Vehicle. (LD 1082). There has been some debate about what different roadway center lines mean and when passing is legal. One new law clarifies this question. Here's what the law now says about where you may not pass:

"When the single center line highway marking is used and (there is) an unbroken painted line."

"When a double line marking is used, and an unbroken painted line is marked on the way in the operator's lane (driver's side of the road)."

Also remember these other areas that have already been defined as locations where passing is not allowed:

- When approaching the crest of a grade or on a curve where operator's view is obstructed.
- When approaching within 100 feet of, or transversing, an intersection or rail grade crossing.
- When the view is obstructed within 100 feet of a bridge, viaduct or tunnel.

Flash Facts Comments

Passing can be a dangerous maneuver putting your vehicle, the vehicle being passed, and any oncoming traffic at serious risk.

- Think twice (or three times) about whether the pass is necessary and if you really are going to gain much by making that move.

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- Obey the double yellow no pass law, and in any passing situation, make sure you have adequate clear distance to make a safe, comfortable pass.
- Watch for traffic that might be entering the oncoming lane from driveways on the left.

Other Recent Laws that are aimed at saving lives on Maine roads:

Young Drivers and Mobile Phone and Other Hand Held Electronic Devices. As of September 20, 2007, anyone less than 18 years-old will be prohibited from driving while using a mobile phone or handheld electronic device. The law sets a \$50 fine for the first violation and \$250 for second or subsequent offenses.

A new graduated licensing bill was passed in 2003. This law establishes a 3-step graduated licensing system for new drivers under 21 years of age. The graduated licensing system places certain driving restrictions at the first 2 levels. By successfully completing each level, the young driver can graduate to the next, less restrictive phase of the licensing process. The graduated licensing system consists of a Supervised Instruction Permit, an Intermediate License and an Unrestricted License. This law makes the following specific changes to implement the graduated licensing system.

Supervised Instruction Permits

- Must complete a minimum of 35 hours of driving, including 5 hours at night. Must be accompanied by a parent, guardian or licensed driver at least 20 years of age (who holds a license that has not been suspended or revoked for the past two years).
- Cannot use a cell phone while driving

Intermediate Licenses

- Those under 21 must hold a Supervised Instruction Permit for 6 months before applying for an Unrestricted driver's license.
- Those under 18 years of age cannot carry passengers, except for immediate family members or a driver who has held a license for two years.
- Drivers under 18 cannot drive from 12 a.m. to 5 a.m. for the first 180 days.
- Violation of Intermediate License terms requires a 180 day extension of the intermediate license.
- A moving violation requires mandatory license suspension (without right to a hearing) for:
 - √ 30 days on the 1st offense;
 - √ 60 days on the 2nd offense; and
 - √ 90 days on the 3rd offense.



(These terms also apply to drivers under 21 years of age for violations occurring within two years of issue of the Intermediate License.)

Flash Facts comments:

- Parents - you are a key ingredient to keeping your teens safe.
- Make sure both parents and teens know what the Graduated licensing laws are.
- Let teen drivers know that you support the rules.

A Child Passenger Safety Law (Booster Seat) went into affect in 2003:

All children under 8 years-old and between 40 and 80 pounds must ride in a federally-approved child restraint system ("booster seat").

- A child under 12 years-old that weighs less than 100 pounds must be properly secured in the back seat of the vehicle, if possible.
- ALL vehicle occupants over 8 years-old must be secured in a (Federally approved) safety seat belt.
- The driver is responsible for properly securing children under 18 years-old in the required child safety seat, booster seat or safety belt.
- Violating the child safety seat/restraint law will result in a fine plus court costs.
- Maine has Child Safety Seat Program sites located throughout the state to assist low-income families in acquiring the proper safety seat/restraint system. Contact either the Department of Human Services or Department of Public Safety for further information.

Some other important Maine safety laws:

Alcohol:

No driver or passenger can consume alcohol or possess an open alcoholic container. Maine has a zero tolerance alcohol law for drivers under 21 years old. (If you are found with any blood alcohol content, you can be convicted of operating a motor vehicle while under the influence, with severe penalties including loss of drivers license for at least one year, stiff fine, and possible jail time.)

There is a 0.08 maximum blood alcohol content for drivers 21 and older. So, don't take a chance of being caught for OUI. If you are going to drink alcohol, don't drive!

Headlights must be on:

- When windshield wipers are in constant use.
- Half an hour after sunset and half an hour before sunrise.
- When you cannot see 1000 feet ahead.

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- Always, if you are on a motorcycle.

Pedestrians:

- Drivers turning at intersections must yield to pedestrians crossing on a green light.
- Drivers must yield the right of way to a pedestrian crossing the street within a marked crosswalk (however pedestrians must not step out in front of moving vehicles, and must get eye contact with the driver to ensure safety).
- When crossing a sidewalk (such as when entering or exiting driveways) drivers must yield the right of way to all pedestrians on the sidewalk.
- Pedestrians must face traffic when traveling.

Bicyclists:

- Children 16 and younger are required to wear helmets while bicycling. With the new law, police now have the ability to summon an offender. The law now directs officers to warn a youth for the first offense, then issue a summons with a \$25 fine for the second offense.
- Bicycle riders under age 16 are required to wear helmets.
- Motorists may not turn right into the path of a bicyclist proceeding in the same direction.
- Bicyclists must ride to the right side of the road except when making left-hand turns.
- Head and taillights are required when riding at night. (Also make sure your bike has reflectors that allow you to be seen from all directions.)
- When driving, you must give bicyclists a 3-foot safety cushion as you pass them on the road. (New in 2007)

Motorcycles:

Who Must Wear Helmets:

- Every person under 15 years old who rides as a passenger
- Every person who operates on a Learner's Permit
- Every operator for the first year after passing the road test.

Be a Road Model, obey all traffic laws and always wear your safety belt.